

Part I

Overview

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

This guide has been developed to provide a description of the procedures for developing and conducting valid and reliable hiring interviews. A *valid* interview means that job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (e.g., personality, physical requirements, (KSAOs)) are being assessed and that job performance can be predicted from performance in the interview. A *reliable* interview means that the same responses are given the same rating.

For the purpose of this guide, a distinction has been made between an *employment* interview and a *hiring* interview. An **employment** interview is used to assess the qualifications of a candidate (i.e., Qualifications Appraisal Panel), while a **hiring** interview is used to determine the candidate-organization “fit.” A hiring interview is conducted after an employment interview, when the candidates’ qualifications for the job have been established.

Guide Overview

Part I – Overview

Part II – Identifying What to Assess

Part III – Developing Interview Format and Content

Part IV – Establishing Scoring Criteria

Part V – Selecting and Training Panel Members

Part VI – Conducting and Scoring the Interview

End of Part I

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 

Part II

Identifying What to Assess

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

Base Interview Content on an Up-to-date Job Analysis of the Position

A job analysis involves identifying the essential tasks of a job, as well as the KSAOs that are required to perform those tasks. A job analysis also indicates which KSAOs are required *upon entry* to a job. These are the KSAOs that should be assessed.

While the essential tasks of some positions (e.g., clerical positions) rarely change, the essential tasks of other positions (e.g., information technology positions) continually change.

To ensure that selection decisions are based upon current and accurate job requirements, any existing job analysis should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated before testing and interviewing are conducted.

Information about a job can be gathered from many sources:

- interviews with incumbents and their supervisors
- questionnaires completed by incumbents and their supervisors
- documents, such as a class specification, job description, job announcement, and a previous job analysis
- direct observation of incumbents

NOTE: *The job analysis information used to determine the content of the hiring interview may be collected by the hiring agency or it may be obtained from another agency that uses the same classification.*

End of Part II

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 

Part III

Developing Interview Format and Content

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

Select a Structured Interview Format

A structured interview provides little or no opportunity for the interview panel members to diverge from the format. Three such types of structured interviews are the situational interview, the comprehensive structured interview, and the behavior description interview.

Situational Interview

The situational interview consists of a series of work-related scenarios that require the candidate to describe how he or she would handle the situation if confronted with it on the job.

Because situational questions focus on what the candidate *would* do in a particular situation rather than on what the candidate *has* done in a past similar situation, they are useful for entry-level positions in which a candidate is not expected to possess previous experience.

Example: “Assume you are a supervisor and one of your subordinate employees consistently arrives late to work. What action would you take?”

The scenarios which comprise the situational interview questions can be developed on the basis of a job analysis or from input from subject matter experts.

Comprehensive Structured Interview

The comprehensive structured interview may contain four types of questions:

- Situational
- Job knowledge
- Job simulation
- Worker requirements

Situational questions are identical to those used in the situational interview.

Job knowledge questions assess a knowledge or skill required by the job.

Example: “Explain the concept of *present value* and provide an example of a business application.”

Job simulation questions attempt to simulate the type of behavior required on the job.

Example: “Human resources technicians are required to administer pre-employment written exams and read exam instructions to the candidates. Please read these exam proctor instructions to us as if you were reading them to a large candidate group.”

Worker requirement questions assess work experience, education, licenses, or certificates that are required on the job.

Example: “Please describe your previous work experience preparing detailed financial reports.”

Behavior Description Interview

The behavior description interview is intended to measure typical, rather than maximal, performance. It is based on the belief that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.

Example: “Tell us about a time when you were asked to complete multiple projects with conflicting deadlines. How did you resolve this situation?”

Remember! Questions should only deal with KSAOs that are expected *upon entry* to the job.

Carefully Construct Interview Questions

Questions should be open-ended. Open-ended questions provide a framework in which to respond, yet leave the responsibility with the candidate to determine the level of detail to provide in the response.

Example: “Describe your experience validating selection procedures using content validity.”

Avoid “yes-no” questions, unless they are the best way to get right to the point of an essential qualification.

Example: “Have you ever written a specification for a group health insurance plan?” Yes..8 points, No..0 points

In developing interview questions, it is important to ensure that questions are:

- Realistic given the requirements of the job

- Complex enough to allow adequate demonstration of the KSAOs being assessed
- Stated in a straightforward unambiguous manner
- Formulated at the language level appropriate for the candidate group
- Not assessing KSAOs that the candidate can acquire on the job

NOTE: *To determine whether an interview question is clearly stated, it may be helpful to ask yourself if the question would be clear to an individual for whom English is a second language.*

End of Part III

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 

Part IV

Establishing Scoring Criteria

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

Develop a Rating Scale

5-, 7-, and 9-point scales are common.

Rating scales with more than ten points become difficult for raters to use, and result in inconsistent ratings among raters.

Label the Points on the Rating Scale

Provide a “Level of Performance” label for each point (or group of points) on the scale.

Typically, anchored rating scales differentiate three levels of performance: “*Well Qualified*,” “*Qualified*,” and “*Not Qualified*.”

Following are examples of 5-, 7-, and 9-point rating scales and corresponding levels of performance:

9-point scale

<u>Level of Performance</u>	<u>Rating Range</u>
Well Qualified	7 to 9 points
Qualified	4 to 6 points
Not Qualified	1 to 3 points

7-point scale

<u>Level of Performance</u>	<u>Rating Range</u>
Well Qualified	6 to 7 points
Qualified	3 to 5 points
Not Qualified	1 to 2 points

5-point scale

<u>Level of Performance</u>	<u>Rating Range</u>
Well Qualified	5 points
Qualified	3 to 4 points
Not Qualified	1 to 2 points

Develop Benchmark Answers

For each question, describe the response(s) that reflect(s) each level of performance on the rating scale. These responses can then be used as guidelines, or benchmarks, for scoring.

Benchmark Example

Following is an example of benchmarks created for use with a 7-point rating scale for an interview question:

Interview Question:

What are the main reasons and objectives of evaluating employee performance?

Possible Answers:


1. To measure employee performance against job standards
2. To let the employee know where he/she stands with respect to work performed and performance standards
3. To help prepare the employee for promotion, job change, job enrichment, or transfer
4. To assist the supervisor in determining how well he/she does his/her own job
5. To provide the employee with the opportunity for current improvement in job performance, if necessary, and future development in the job
6. To help the employee and the supervisor accomplish the job more effectively and with a higher level of satisfaction

Benchmark Responses:

Well Qualified	7	Candidate's answer is complete and thorough. Candidate addresses at least 5 of the possible answers outlined above (or makes comparable points). Candidate may not elaborate on all of the items listed above, but he/she demonstrates an excellent understanding of both the employee's role and the supervisor's role in the area of performance evaluation.
	6	Candidate's response is well formulated and requires no probing.
Qualified	5	Candidate addresses at least 4 of the possible answers listed above (or makes comparable points). Candidate demonstrates a sufficient understanding of the employee's role and the supervisor's role in the evaluation process.
	4	Candidate's response may not be as well formulated or as complete as that provided by the well-qualified candidate; however, candidate demonstrates the level of knowledge
	3	and understanding required in this position.

Not Qualified	2	Candidate addresses fewer than 4 of the possible answers outlined above (or comparable points), OR candidate's response may be vague, incomplete, or incorrect. Candidate's response may not address the question or does not adequately address the intent/reasoning behind evaluating employee performance. Candidate fails to demonstrate the level of knowledge and/or understanding required in this position.
	1	

End of Part IV

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 

Part V

Selecting and Training Panel Members

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

In some situations (e.g., a team-oriented organization), a panel interview may be desired. This section provides several tips for appropriately selecting and training panel members.

Select Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

Panel members should be knowledgeable about the position for which the interview is being held and thoroughly familiar with the job requirements.

Provide Supplemental Information Regarding the Position

Documents such as a job announcement, job description, and class specification can provide helpful information for panel members to become well-acquainted with the position for which the interview is being held.

Additionally, documents containing candidate information such as application forms, resumes, and transcripts can help panel members determine and evaluate candidates' job-related education and experience.

NOTE: *While it is appropriate to provide panel members with job-related candidate information for a hiring interview, it is inappropriate to supply such information for an employment interview. In an employment interview, such information could bias panel members about the qualifications of the candidates. However, when a candidate is invited to a hiring interview, it is known that the candidate possesses the requisite KSAOs for the job. Thus, job-related candidate information can help panel members determine the candidate-organization "fit."*

Review the Questions and Rating Scales

Each panel member should be assigned specific interview questions to ask. Additionally, the panel members should understand how the rating scale works in conjunction with the benchmark answers and suggested responses provided for each question.

Emphasize the Importance of Standardization and Note Taking

Standardization means that all candidates are asked the same questions, in the same order, by the same panel members. Any deviation from this threatens the reliability of the scoring of the interview.

Another factor that is essential for reliable ratings is note taking.

- Panel members should provide clear statements which summarize the candidates' responses.
- It may be helpful to note what a candidate fails to include in a response.
- Value judgments should NOT be included in interview notes (e.g., "bad answers," "shows good understanding of concepts").

Discuss Common Rating Errors

It is important that panel members be cognizant of biases that can affect their ratings. Following are a few common rating errors which can be discussed with panel members prior to conducting the interviews:


Halo effect is the tendency to form an overall impression of a candidate based upon his/her responses to only one or two questions.

Leniency effect is the tendency to give all candidates high ratings. Its counterpart, **stringency effect**, is the tendency to give all candidates low ratings.

Central tendency effect is the tendency to use only the middle portion of the rating scale.

Personal bias is the tendency to allow non job-related prejudices and attitudes about cultural stereotypes, lifestyles, personalities, appearances, or other idiosyncratic perceptions to affect the rating of candidate responses.

End of Part V

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 

Part VI

Conducting and Scoring the Interview

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting Structured Hiring Interviews

Provide Reasonable Accommodations

To ensure that all candidates can compete on an equal basis, those candidates with impairments may require reasonable accommodations. Therefore, candidates should be asked about any need for reasonable accommodations at the time that they are notified of the time and place of their interview. Each request for reasonable accommodation must be addressed individually, and on its own merit. The candidate himself/herself (or his/her representative) can provide the best information regarding the required accommodation.

The ADA coordinator for each agency should be involved in all decisions concerning what constitutes reasonable accommodation.

Types of Impairment

Visual Impairment

Typically, candidates with visual impairments do not require accommodations during a structured interview. However, if the applicant is required to read information during the interview, some form of accommodation will be required. Accommodations vary according to the candidate's degree of visual impairment, from providing the information in special large print to providing a reader.

Hearing Impairment

Candidates with hearing impairments normally require accommodations. Once again, the specified accommodation depends on the degree of impairment. Sometimes all that is needed for accommodation is for the interviewer to sit facing the candidate, speak directly to the candidate, and enunciate clearly. Other candidates with hearing impairments can communicate more effectively by passing written messages back and forth with the interview panel. These candidates should be rated on the content of their answer, however, not on their writing ability.

Other candidates with hearing impairments, however, may require the use of a licensed sign language interpreter to be able to communicate with the panel. It is, therefore, helpful to be aware of available licensed sign language interpreters, and employ their services whenever necessary.

Learning Disability

Candidates with learning disabilities may have problems understanding complex language or organizing visual, auditory, and/or other sensory information. If such disabilities are irrelevant to the position to be filled, but present difficulties regarding the interview, then the disability is considered an impairment, and reasonable accommodations must be made to permit candidates with impairments to compete for the job. Language difficulties may be addressed by reducing the complexity level of the interview language.

Motor Impairment

Most candidates with motor impairments will not need accommodations for the oral part of any structured interview as long as the interview's location is accessible. Many persons who are unable to speak use one of several methods of electronically assisted communication.

Establish a Positive Atmosphere for the Candidate

When the candidate enters the interview room, the interview chairperson should greet the candidate and introduce the other panel members. Additionally, the candidate should be given an explanation of the interview process. This involves informing the candidate of the following:

- All candidates will be asked the same set of questions, in the same order, and will be assessed using the same scoring criteria; and
- The panel will be taking notes throughout the interview. Therefore, while the panel may not maintain eye contact throughout the interview, the panel members will be listening intently, and the candidate should continue answering questions even while the panel members are taking notes.

Take Objective Notes

While the notes that are taken do not need to be verbatim transcripts of what the candidate said, they should accurately reflect how the candidate answered each of the questions. Notes can be taken using abbreviations, incomplete sentences, bulleted items, or paraphrasing. However, it is important that only the content of responses is recorded, NOT personal opinions of the candidate.

Remember! In some cases, it is just as important to note what a candidate fails to include in a response as it is to note the answer provided.

Standardize Interview Format

The panel chairperson is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the candidates are asked the same set of questions, in the same order, by the same panel member.
- Ensuring that all candidates are afforded the same opportunities to demonstrate their qualifications. For example:
 - If a candidate provides an excessively lengthy response, the chairperson should tactfully interrupt the candidate and bring him/her back to the intent of the question.
 - If the candidate fails to address portions of a question, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to address this situation. In this case, the chairperson may query the candidate as to whether he/she has any additional comments to make, or the chairperson could specifically inquire about that portion of the question which the candidate failed to address.

It is important that all panel members avoid revealing either positive or negative reactions to either the candidates or their responses. Candidates should not be able to determine the suitability of their responses from the reaction of panel members, since the reactions of panel members could affect the candidates' subsequent performance.

It is always permissible to repeat any of the interview questions.

Each interview should be completed by thanking the candidate and answering any general questions.

Evaluate the Candidate Immediately After the Interview

After each panel member has completed his/her notes and ratings, a discussion of the candidate should occur. Panel members should compare ratings to ensure that there are no major discrepancies between their ratings. It is desirable that the ratings of the panel members be within the same benchmark (e.g., well qualified, qualified, not qualified) for each question.

End of Part VI

Please e-mail us at the Test Validation and Construction Unit of the State Personnel Board with any comments or suggestions regarding this guide. 